

REMARKS

The above amendments and these remarks are responsive to the Office action dated May 11, 2005. Claims 4-6, 14 and 21-29 are pending in the application. In the Office action, claim 21 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112 as indefinite, claims 4, 6 and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) based on Van Eden et al. (US 6,478,355), claim 21 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Van Eden et al. in view of Reusswig et al. (US 6,398,291), claims 5 and 22-25 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, and claims 14 and 27-29 are allowed. Applicants thank the Examiner for the careful consideration of the application, and for the indications of allowability. Applicants traverse the rejections, but nevertheless amend the claims as shown above. In view of the amendments above, and the remarks below, applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111 and allowance of the pending claims.

Claims 4-6, 21-26, 30

Claim 4 has been amended to recite "wherein the cargo bed is of a rectangular shape, and includes a stationary bottom plate that extends forward from a rear end part of the cargo bed to underneath a rearmost seat substantially at the same level in height to form a bottom plate of an extended portion of the cargo bed with a portion of the stationary bottom plate underneath the rearmost seat." One exemplary embodiment featuring this configuration is shown in Figs. 4A and 4B, reproduced below. One potential advantage of the claimed configuration is that an even surface may be created for stowage of cargo items when the seat is stowed, as shown in Fig. 4B. Another potential advantage is that this configuration forms a bottom plate of an extended portion of the cargo bed, which enables use of a single supporting member, thereby simplifying construction of vehicle and avoiding use of a separate member as a bottom plate for the cargo

bed.

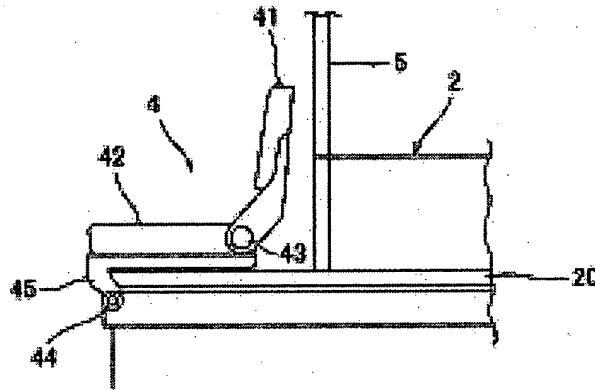


FIG. 4A

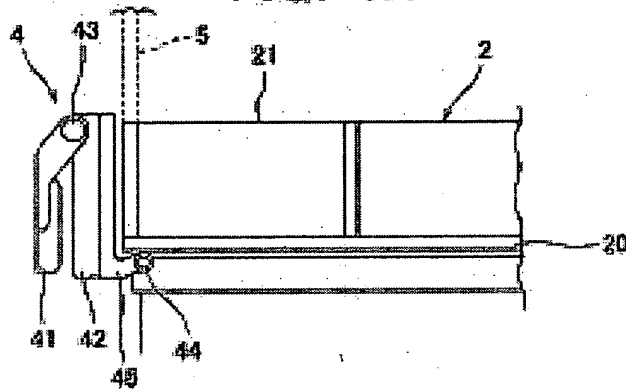


FIG. 4B

Subject Application - Figs. 4A and 4B

In contrast, Van Eden fails to disclose a stationary bottom plate that extends to under a rearmost seat at same level in height, but rather discloses an uneven, stepped bottommost member, as shown in annotated Fig. 6 below. Given this configuration, Van Eden completely fails to provide the benefit of an even surface for stowage of cargo after the seat is stowed. Fig. 3B, also reproduced below, which was identified by the Examiner, appears to show a slidable cargo bed with a bottom member 64. Thus, Van Eden requires two bottom members, slidable

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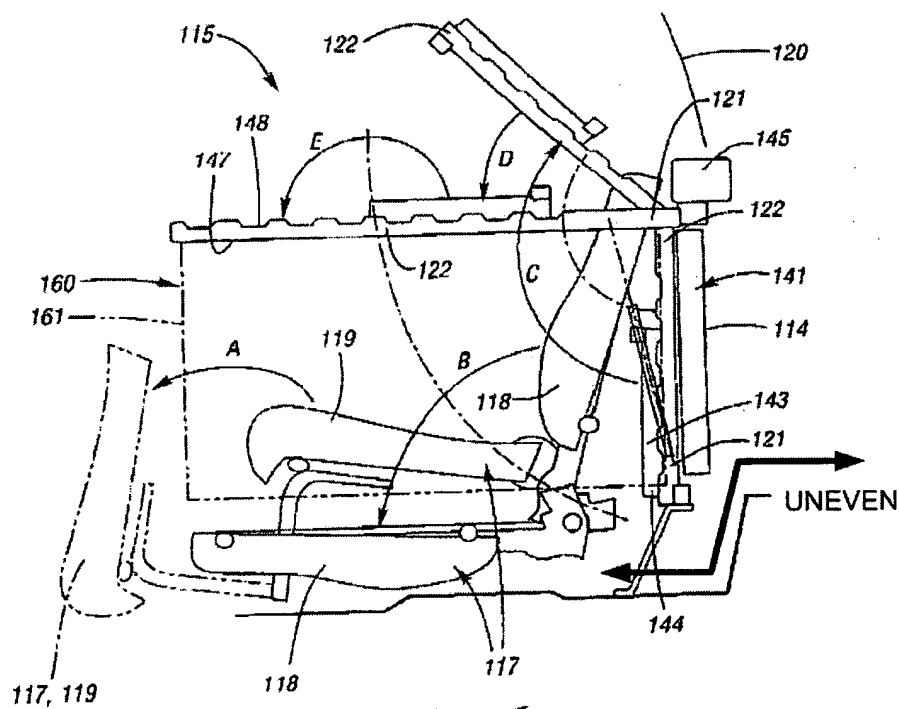


FIG. 6

Van Eden – Fig. 6

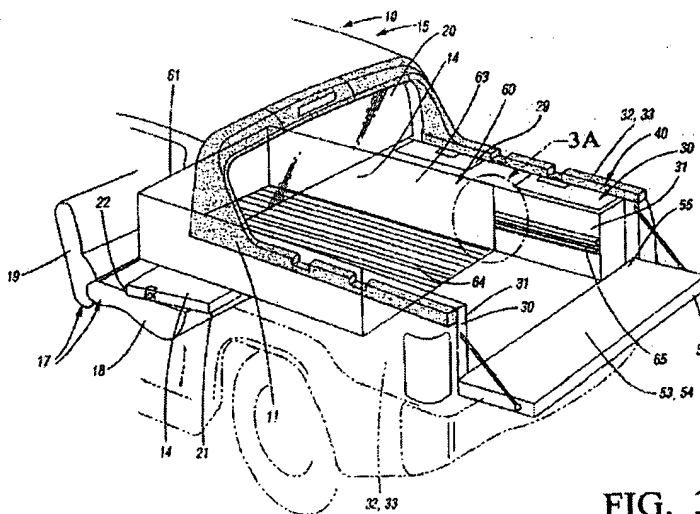


FIG. 3B

Van Eden - Fig. 3B

With regard to new claim 30, this claim recites structural features including the locations of the pivots joining the backrest and bottom portions of the seat, as well as the direction of rotation used to move the seat from a deployed configuration to a stowed configuration.

In view of the differences discussed above, Applicants respectfully submit that neither Van Eden, nor any of the remaining prior art references, discloses or suggests all of the features recited in amended claim 4, and thus amended claim 4, as well as dependent claims 5-6, 21-26, and 30 are believed to be allowable.

Claims 14 and 27-29

These claims stand allowed.

Applicants believe that this application is now in condition for allowance, in view of the above amendments and remarks. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowability covering the pending claims. If the Examiner has any questions, or if a telephone interview would in any way advance prosecution of the application, please contact the undersigned attorney of record.

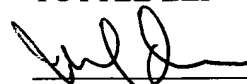
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